Borough Councillor’s Report – JH 01.07.19

This is my first report to the new Parish Council but unfortunately one of the main issues which residents have raised over the past four years is still causing many complaints. The cause for these complaints is the frequency and standard of grass cutting. Many residents wish to see the verges cut while others favour a less formal approach.

Our verges are home to many wildflowers and now species are coming into bloom encouraging and feeding a variety of wildlife.

The borough council is developing a policy on pollination and verges and I very much hope to be part of that conversation.

In the meantime many residents are contacting me about the length of the grass and I’m trying to make sensible judgements about where cutting should take place. I have made requests on streets where residents are keeping the grass verges cut but leaving areas which are less visible and don’t cause complaints.

My own view is that verges on our country lanes such as Dutton’s Lane, parts of Acres Lane, Caughall Road and where verges abut hedges and open areas should remain uncut, along with verges on main roads like A41 where there is no danger to traffic. I welcome local views.

We are lucky in Upton to have so many green spaces which offer opportunities for wildlife, wild flowers, community gardening, orchards, incredible edible and much more. On Monday I met with our localities team for putting together plans for the next four years. You will know from previous reports that we are working on improving Lodge Gardens and making it an attractive disability friendly and productive area. The current overgrown flower beds will be grubbed up and replanted. I hope residents will let us know what they’d like to see there. So far on the list are raised beds, fruit trees, a wild flower area, compost bins and bees and insect friendly planting. I have also raised the need to preserve and hopefully repair the lovely sandstone wall. This won’t be a quick fix project.

I’ve also asked the team to include the triangle at the junction of Flag Lane North and A41 in the work plan. They are checking the ownership of the land.

The borough council has some projects they are promoting, including the Green Team. I have included here the CWaC description.

Vivo, working in partnership with the Council, has established a dedicated “Green Team” service which provides volunteer services 5 days a week undertaking environmental, gardening and tidying-up projects across the Borough. The projects are all based in the local community and are a wonderful opportunity to develop strong links and friendships with the wider community. The Green Team is already involved in a number of exciting projects supporting local neighbourhoods, community groups and the Council. This includes maintaining and improving parks, allotments and public spaces across the Borough. The Green Team has 30-40 volunteers from our Learning Disability services who have an interest and passion for gardening and environmental outdoor projects. They will volunteer (1 to 5 days per week based on their level of interest) as part of a regular team working in the community. The team is fully resourced with the necessary equipment, transport, staff, training and in a Vivo Green Team uniform – to be launched and presented to our service users at the event - to create a strong sense of identity, pride and visibility. In time we hope that the service users will take on an Ambassador role for promoting the Green Team and enhance their skills through more horticultural training and experience. Ultimately, we aspire to creating a number of supported employment opportunities as the Green Team expands its operations with other organisations and employers across the Borough.

I have already expressed an interest in using this scheme in Upton and I hope Parish Councillors will support this. I will be going along to the launch to learn more about what I feel is a great initiative.

This year, again the churchyard at Holy Ascension has been sadly neglected. I have reported the disgraceful state of the burial ground on three separate occasions and raised the issue with the Localities Team last week. The grass is now obliterating many of the headstones and this is causing so much anger and distress to relatives and friends visiting the graves.

Residents and the WI have contacted me wanting to get involved in looking after the area. I suggest that this is something in which the Parish Council can play a role and that we ask the Clerk to lead on this. We can start work once the basic work has been completed.

Several residents have contacted me about the timing of the pedestrian crossing on Long Lane so I raised the concerns with Highways and this is the response.

1. The green man man period (invitation to cross) is 5 seconds.

2.   There is a crossing over the northbound carriageway and the southbound carriageway. The pedestrian timings are the same for both crossings.

3.   The southbound crossing is 8.2 metres wide. At a walking speed of 1.2 metres per second (as per current guidance) it requires 6.83 seconds to cross the road.

4.   The northbound crossing is 6.7 metres wide. At a walking speed of 1.2 metres per second (as per current guidance) it requires 5.58 seconds to cross the road.

5.   The maximum inter-green period between the pedestrian phase and vehicle phase is 18 seconds therefore should a pedestrian start to cross at the end of the green man period they have a maximum of 18 seconds to complete their journey across the road before conflicting vehicle traffic receives a green signal. The length of this period is dependent upon the pedestrians being sensed by the on-crossing detectors as both pedestrian crossings are equipped with on-crossing detectors and it should be noted that pedestrians must walk between the studs which mark the crossing area so that they are sensed by the detectors.

The crossing has been checked and the traffic signals are working correctly.

The proposed cycle path on Liverpool Road will not be going ahead in the proposed form. Councillor Bryan and I met with Kay Parry to discuss the objections, of which there were many, and we both feel this needs a rethink.

We are now waiting for the new plans. However it is proposed the 30mph speed limit on Liverpool Road is extended up to Moston where is becomes 50mph. We also hope there maybe a way we can use some 106 money destined for the cycleway on a 30mph sign on the A41.

Last week Councillor Bryan and I delivered letters from Highways to properties on Upton Drive where it is proposed to extend the double yellow lines. We hope residents will respond. Highways have also marked out an area at the junction of Mill Lane and Egerton Drive for repairs to the highway. We have also asked that the parking on Egerton Drive is monitored following the change in the double lines there. Residents are concerned about the ‘creep’ of parking and that the junction with Stanton Drive is often difficult to navigate.